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BHAVANI IST INDIAN FENCER TO QUALIFY FOR OLYMPICS

Bhavani Devi took up the sport as a means to escape from the grind of studies. The Chennai woman qualifies on her rankings

IMPROVES WORLD RANKING, GOES TO TOKYO

The 27-year-old sabre fencer secured a spot in the World Cup in Hungary after the hosts lost in the quarterfinals of the team event to South Korea. With South Korea qualifying as a team, two individual spots opened up for the Asia and Oceania regions based on World Rankings through which Bhavani managed to make it. She currently holds the 42nd rank

HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION

- She reached round of 16 at Fencing World Championships in 2019, her best effort so far, where she virtually sealed her spot
- Not pursuing a well-known sport, she struggled with her finances early on. Tamil Nadu government and family support her
- She is trained by Italian coach Nicola Zanotti | P13

42nd

WORLD RANKING SHE OCCUPIES TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR ASIA SLOT

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

MANY STARS FIND PLACE IN BJP'S POLL LIST FOR 4 STATES

Union Minister Babul Supriyo, Metro man Sreedharan, actor Kushboo to contest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

THE BJP on Sunday released a star-studded list of candidates for the upcoming Assembly polls in four states. The candidates included Union minister Babul Supriyo, former Chief Economic Advisor Ashok Lahiri, Metro man E Sreedharan, film star Kushboo Sundar and five sitting MPs.

Of these, four Members of Parliament, including Union Minister Supriyo, are contesting in West Bengal, while two from Kerala.

Party general secretary Arun Singh along with Union Ministers Babul Supriyo and Debasree Chaudhuri released the names of 63 candidates for West Bengal Assembly polls, 17 each for Assam and Tamil Nadu and 112 for Kerala.

Singh said the party will contest from 115 out of 140 Assembly seats in Kerala, while in rest of the constituencies, its allies will field candidates.

For the high-stakes West Bengal polls, it has fielded Supriyo from Tollygunge and Lok Sabha members Nishit Pramanik and Locket Chatterjee from Dinhata and Chunchura, respectively. Senior journalist and Rajya Sabha member Swapan Dasgupta will contest from the Tarakeshwar seat. Outgoing MLA from Singur and veteran leader Rabindranath Bhattacharya, who had crossed over to BJP from Trinamool Congress after it denied him a ticket, has been fielded from the same seat.

> We have given importance to new faces in this election. Eighty-six names have been finalised in the 92 seats in which Congress is contesting
>
> Mullappally Ramachandran, Kerala PCC chief

Former Chief Economic Advisor Ashok Lahiri will contest from Alipurduar.

In Kerala, BJP has fielded Metro man Sreedharan from Palakkad and former Union Minister and sitting MP K J Alphons from the Kanjirappally. Another sitting Rajya Sabha member Suresh Gopi will run from Thrissur, while the party's Kerala state unit president K Surendran will contest from two seats — Manjeshwar and Konni.

In Tamil Nadu, actor-turned-politician Kushboo Sundar will be the candidate for the Thousand Lights Assembly seat. The party's women cell president Vanathi Srinivasan will take on film star Kamal Haasan in Coimbatore South.

Meanwhile, the Congress on Sunday came out with its first list of 86 candidates for the Kerala Assembly elections. Former chief minister Oommen Chandy will contest from Puthuppally, while Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Ramesh Chennithala from Haripad. Sitting MP from Vadakara K Muraleedharan will contest from Nemom, the only seat in the state currently represented by BJP. P5,9

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a rally to mark Nandigram Diwas, in Kolkata on Sunday | PTI

> I have faced a lot of attacks in my life but I have never surrendered before anyone. I will never bow my head. An injured tiger gets more dangerous.... My pain is not greater than the suffering of people as democracy is being trampled through dictatorship
>
> Mamata Banerjee

EC rules out attack angle, suspends police officers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

REJECTING claims that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was attacked in Nandigram, the Election Commission on Sunday attributed the injury she sustained on her left foot on Wednesday to an accident. Nevertheless, the EC placed under suspension a few senior officers for lapses in the CM's security, and appointed former DGP Intelligence Punjab Anil Kumar Sharma as a special police observer for the state.

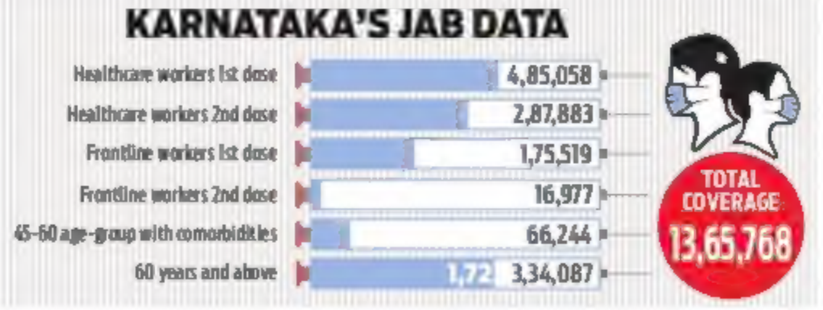
The poll panel ordered the suspension of Vivek Sahay, Director Security of the CM's protection team. "The charges must be framed against him within a week for grossly failing in discharge of his primary duty as Director Security to protect the Z+ protectee," the EC said.

It also suspended Pravin Prakash, superintendent of police of Purba Medinipur for failing to provide adequate *bandobast* at Nandigram. The district magistrate and district election officer of Purba Medinipur, too, was axed. The decisions were based on the report of the chief secretary and the joint report by special general observer Ajay Nayak and special police observer Vivek Dube. P9

Ruckus in Puducherry Cong office

Puducherry: High drama unfolded at the Puducherry Pradesh Congress Committee office on Sunday during a meeting to finalise the candidates' list for the April 6 polls. Some partymen were against allocating key seats to the DMK, and some senior leaders had to intervene to pacify them. Meanwhile, Congress has been earmarked 15 seats, while its alliance partner DMK has been allotted 13 seats.

KARNATAKA'S JAB DATA


Healthcare workers 1st dose 4,85,058
Healthcare workers 2nd dose 2,87,883
Frontline workers 1st dose 1,75,519
Frontline workers 2nd dose 16,977
45-60 age-group with comorbidities 66,244
60 years and above 1,72 3,34,087
TOTAL COVERAGE 13,65,768

CM calls for Covid meet today, no lockdown yet

30 test +ve in Hosapete Rly quarters

The railway quarters in Hosapete has been declared a red zone, after 30 people, including Railway employees and their relatives, tested positive for Covid-19 in the last one week. The infected workers and their family members are kept in isolation

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

WITH Covid cases rising in Karnataka over the last three weeks, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa will chair a review meeting on Monday. The meeting set off speculation of a possible lockdown or curfew, but Medical Education and Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar told *The New Indian Express* that the government has no plans of imposing a lockdown for now.

Karnataka is slowly seeing a recovery in economic activity after the lockdown. A new set of restrictions, the Chief Minister believes, will be counter-productive especially when the state is facing an economic slowdown, sources said.

"I appeal to the people with folded hands for cooperation. If people cooperate I'm confident that without lockdown we can control Covid. My appeal to people is that if you don't want lockdown and want all activities to continue, people have to cooperate by wearing masks and maintaining distance," said Yediyurappa, ahead of the meeting at 5 pm on Monday.

The meeting is aimed at stricter implementation of Covid protocols and restrictions. Yediyurappa is expected to get a briefing on the situation in the border districts of Maharashtra and Kerala by respective district officials. P3

CD-GATE

SIT notice to woman, assures her protection

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the CD-gate allegedly involving former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, has served a notice to the woman seen in the video to appear before the police. On Sunday, the SIT also questioned two people, including the 'woman's boyfriend'.

The notice to the woman, who is missing since the day the video has been released, is said to have been posted on the door of her house in Vijayapura district, as there was no one at home and the door was locked. A notice has been served on the owner of the room at RT Nagar in Bengaluru, where the woman was staying. The police have sent notices to officials of WhatsApp and the email company with which she had an account, sources said.

CONTINUED ON: P4

WITH THIS ISSUE
THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST
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EXPRESS READ

18 protesters killed by forces in Myanmar

Yangon: At least 18 protesters were killed in Myanmar on Sunday, in one of the most violent crackdowns by security forces against dissent since last month's military coup, AFP reported. Around 95 protesters have been shot dead by the junta. P11

Cop Sachin Waze in NIA custody till March 25

Mumbai: Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze, arrested in the probe into recovery of explosives from a car near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence, was on Sunday remanded to the National Investigation Agency custody till March 25. P10

Selling govt banks a huge mistake: Raghuarm Rajan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LENDING indirect support to the two-day strike called by a section of public-sector bank employees over the Centre's plan to privatise two PSU banks, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on Sunday said the government's move would be utterly foolish.

"I think it would be a colossal mistake to sell the banks to industrial houses," Rajan said in an interview to news agency PTI.

According to Rajan, currently a Professor at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, it will also not be politically feasible to sell any decent-sized bank to foreign banks.

He feels some Indian private banks may be in a position to acquire inefficient PSU banks and turn them around, too. But the question is whether they have the appetite, he said.

According to bank unions, over 10 lakh employees will take part in the strike on Monday and Tuesday. The protest could cripple branch operations such as deposits and withdrawal at branches, cheque clearance and loan approvals.

Most PSU banks, including SBI, have alerted customers about possible disruption in operations.

ATM and internet banking services are unlikely to be hit.

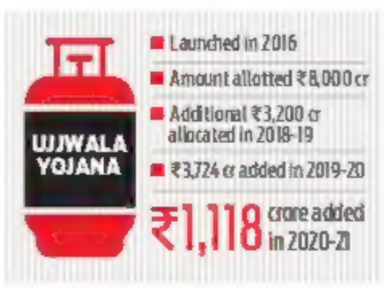
BACK TO WOOD FIRE

Steep prices smoke out LPG in villages

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

THE country's first village that bid goodbye to traditional cooking fuels, like wood, and went smokeless was Vyachakurahalli from Chikkaballapur district in 2015. But in 2021, six years down the line, thousands of households, especially in rural Karnataka, are contemplating switching back to firewood or coal for cooking and ditching gas stoves as LPG prices have skyrocketed over the last year.

Under the much-hyped Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), women below the poverty line get a free gas cylinder and subsidised refills to wean them away from unhealthy cooking fuels to make villages smoke-free.


UJJWALA YOJANA
Launched in 2016
Amount allotted ₹8,000 cr
Additional ₹3,200 cr allocated in 2018-19
₹3,724 cr added in 2019-20
₹1,118 crore added in 2020-21

Though a release from Indian Oil Corporation Ltd stated that a 7.3 per cent increase has been seen in overall LPG consumption between December 2020 and February 2021, a reality check by *The New Indian Express* suggests otherwise.

In rural parts of Karnataka, including in Mysuru, Kalaburagi, Chikkaballapur, Chikkamgaluru, Uttara Kannada and other districts, many households are using LPG only as an emergency option and have not got refills over the last many months.

CONTINUED ON: P5

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Life Cover with attractive returns
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16 | 10
21 | 15
25 | 16
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• Maximum Basic Sum Assured: No limit
• Minimum Entry Age: 8 years
• Maximum Entry Age: 50/54/59 years for policy term 25/21/16 years
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